

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal  
CONDUCTED BY  
CHARLES DICKENS

No. 793. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1884.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

## A DRAWN GAME.

BY BASIL.

AUTHOR OF "LOVE THE DEBT," ETC.

### CHAPTER XVIII. DICK HAS GREATNESS THRUST UPON HIM.

DICK considered The Keep capital quarters on the whole, but it had two drawbacks—Ida's unfortunate presence, and the still more unfortunate absence of his dog. Dick loved his dog, a fine Irish retriever, better than anything and anyone else in the world, and he expected it to be taken into a friend's house as part of himself.

Now, Mr. Tuck had a horror of dogs in the house, in part out of regard for his furniture, and in part through fear of hydrophobia. Even Mrs. Tuck's Nan had been banished in the very first days of their marriage. Therefore, Dick's red retriever Bran, which all its life long had been used to sleep at the foot of his master's chair by day and of his bed by night, was pitilessly and peremptorily banished to the stables, where he made night hideous with his howls. The servants, who slept, or tried to sleep, at that side of the house, got to hate the poor brute, and showed their hatred by many a kick and cuff, and by sometimes neglecting, in Dick's absence, to give it food or water. This unaccustomed ill-treatment, neglect, confinement, and separation from its master, told so terribly on the wretched creature, that Dick at last made his mind up to quit The Keep, and seek some more hospitable shelter for himself and his dog.

When he announced this resolution, Ida was very much surprised and pleased by the really deep feeling he showed in speaking of his dog. She took herself roundly to task for her misjudgment of Dick, and for her inhospitable treatment of him, and determined

that, if he could but be persuaded to stay, she would show her repentance in her amended manners. She did what she could to persuade him to stay by promising, to Dick's amazement, that she would herself look after the dog in its master's occasional absences. Nothing could have so reconciled Dick to Ida as this surprising promise of hers to look after his first friend, and he showed his gratitude by the fervour of his acknowledgment of it, though he explained, at the same time, that it was not so much its ill-treatment as its separation from its master which made it miserable, and made necessary his departure.

A little later that morning, Ida, standing at a window in the breakfast-room, arranging some flowers in a vase, saw Bran being hotly pursued by a groom with a heavy weapon of some kind in his hand. She threw up the lower sash, stooped, stepped out on to the lawn, and hurried towards the dog and its pursuer to save it from punishment. Midway, a sudden certainty that the dog was mad rooted her to the ground. She had heard so much about hydrophobia lately, and so much that morning of the misery the wretched dog had gone through, that this idea of madness at once occurred to her and paralysed her. The dog was panting, foaming, running, not as to or from anything, but mechanically, and as though possessed. Ida stood straight in its path, arrested, and as if turned by a spell to stone, in the attitude in which the idea of her danger found and fixed her—one hand still holding some flowers, the other loose at her side, one foot advanced, and the other in part raised for the next step, fear shown only in her fixed eyes, parted lips, and marble face. She was looking, not so much at the dog as at a

horrible succession of pictures of death by hydrophobia, which flashed in a moment, vivid as reality itself, through her brain.

In another moment Dick stood between her and this death. He had not even seen Ida, and had no suspicion of the dog's madness, but, catching a glimpse through the laurels of Bran being pursued, he rushed out to save him. Then, too late, he saw his danger, as the dog was unmistakably mad. Being a man of iron nerve and of ready resource, he made his mind up, in the moment that remained to him, as to what was best to do. He had in his hand a stick, not heavy enough to brain the dog, and with this he struck it with all his force across the knees, and brought it down; then he caught and held it by the throat with both hands.

Here the groom came up with a gun, which he would have fired before but for the fear of shooting Ida.

"Put the muzzle to his ear and fire," cried Dick.

But the man, not having Dick's nerve, feared to fire so near his hands.

"If you'll leave hold on him, sir, I'll fire before he can raise his head."

"Why can't you fire now?"

"I daren't, sir, with your hand touching the muzzle."

"Why, you fool—well, look out then."

Here he let go his hold of the dog, and the groom fired, but the dog was too quick for him. Dick's hands were hardly off his throat when he got his head from under the muzzle of the gun, and by a sudden and savage snap buried his teeth in his master's arm. Then, too late, the groom fired and disabled him, and by another shot put him out of pain.

While Dick was undoing his sleeve-link to have a look at his bitten arm, he saw Ida for the first time. She, of course, imagined that he had rushed into the danger to save her, therefore the fear that he had been bitten was horrible to her. With a trembling hand on his arm, and such a haggard look of anxiety in her face as even the easy-going Dick did not soon forget, she faltered out:

"You've been bitten."

"Oh, it's nothing, thank you. The skin's only just broken. I shall burn it out and be right enough."

Hereupon, Ida, for the first and last time in her life, fainted. The strain upon her had been intense. In that single minute she had realised in her vivid imagination the approach of this frightful

death, her escape from it, and the cost of that escape.

Dick sent the man to the house for help, which, however, was at hand before he reached the door. The discharge of the gun under the windows had brought out half the household, and Mrs. Tuck among the rest. To her Dick committed Ida, referring her to the groom for an account of the business, as he was naturally in a hurry to cauterize his arm. The groom, being also under the impression that the captain, seeing that the dog was mad, and Ida in danger, had flung himself heroically between them, gave this account to Mrs. Tuck, when she could spare attention to it on Ida's coming to herself.

"He's been bitten!" gasped Mrs. Tuck.

The groom "didn't rightly know"—knowing right well, but beginning to realise his own responsibility for this bad business. Mrs. Tuck bid him saddle a horse at once and be ready to ride at life and death speed for the doctor, while she hurried into the house to find Dick. She found him in the kitchen—where, at this time of the year, was the only fire—scientifically cauterizing the bite with a red-hot poker, to an accompaniment of shrieks, groans, and ejaculations of pity and horror from the fascinated cook and kitchenmaid.

"Oh, Dick!" groaned Mrs. Tuck, sinking sickened and helpless into a chair by the door.

"I'm all right, aunt," in a voice whose coolness was not affected. He had no "nerves," and little thought for the morrow, and believed that the virus had probably been strained out by his coat and shirt-sleeve, and at any rate had been intercepted by cauterization. "I'm all right, aunt; it's only a scratch, and my coat kept the poison out. I've burned the bite besides, as I knew you'd make a fuss if I didn't," laying the poker down and pulling down his shirt-sleeve.

"Jane," gasped Mrs. Tuck, "tell Ticknor—the doctor."

Jane rightly interpreting this spasmodic message, rushed off to send the groom for Dr. Kirk. But the doctor was already half-way up the avenue on one of his frequent visits to the valetudinarian Mr. Tuck.

Being shown, on his arrival, into the kitchen, where Dick was administering brandy-and-water to his half-fainting aunt, he examined the wound, pronounced the cautery imperfectly done, and an imperfect prophylactic in any case, and insisted on excision.

Dick rather grumbled at having his bridle-arm whittled away at this rate, but shrank from the operation only on that ground; though it had to be performed without chloroform, with which the doctor was of course unprovided.

Dick certainly would have preferred chloroform, if it was to be had, as he was glad to inhale laughing-gas when he had a tooth to be drawn. He was the last man in the world to court unnecessary pain, but he bore what there was no help for with stoic fortitude. Physically, in fact, there was no finer specimen of a man in England than our captain.

He bared his arm, and watched the doctor deftly cutting out the piece without the movement of a muscle or the quivering of an eyelid, greatly to the advantage of the operation and to the admiration of the surgeon.

"Your nephew is made of iron, Mrs. Tuck—made of iron inside and out," he said to that lady in Ida's hearing. "There's not the least fear of hydrophobia in his case, and just because there's no fear of it; for I believe half the cases come from nervousness. But Captain Brabazon doesn't know what nervousness means. He held his arm while I cut out the piece as still and steady as I hold this glass. There was no need whatever of chloroform," regarding evidently that anæsthetic as providentially designed to make an operation easy rather to the doctor than to the patient.

"I dare say you got through it very well without," said Mrs. Tuck, who would have joked if in extremis. Besides, she was relieved by the doctor's assurance of Dick's perfect security, for the doctor (as she had too good reason to know in the case of her poor dear husband) made the worst—that is, the most of a case. And, indeed, he meant to make something more out of Dick. He promised to call daily, and send purifying blood-mixtures, and he prescribed absolute abstinence from tobacco and stimulants.

Dick did not, of course, take his aunt's serious view of the prescriptions of "the leech," which obsolete title he revived for the doctor as appropriate to his blood-sucking attendance on Mr. Tuck. But, as he did not wish to make her uncomfortable, he compromised the matter by consenting to drink nothing stronger than the mixtures on the condition that he was allowed to smoke. There was something suspicious in the alacrity with which he proposed the compromise, yet it took Mrs. Tuck some days

to discover that the mixtures she had been so gratified to find him drinking even before they were due, and in even undue quantities, were wines and spirits which mimicked the doctor's draughts as closely in colour as the wholesome *Leptalis* butterfly mimics the colour of the poisonous *Ithomia*.

Her suspicions were at last aroused one evening by seeing Dick take two table-spoonfuls instead of one, at an interval of an hour instead of three, of a light brown draught. She took up the bottle, uncorked, and smelled it.

"Brandy!" she exclaimed, aghast.

"My dear aunt, you didn't really think I was drinking Kirk's rot?" in a tone of utter and innocent amazement.

Dick was equanimous in other emergencies besides that of the charge of a mad dog.

"Well, Dick, you know what the consequences may be!"

"If you mean hydrophobia, aunt, I've had it all my life. You know I never could drink clean water, and is it likely I could stand that filth? Ugh!"

There was nothing for it but to allow Dick to drink his liquor, without pouring it at measured intervals, and with measured accuracy, from a medicine-bottle into a table-spoon, and from a table-spoon into a wine-glass—a performance he had gone through many times a day with a wry but resolved face.

Mrs. Tuck even forgave him for having passed on the bonâ fide mixtures to her poor dear husband, who drank them in perfect good faith and excellent results, for he never caught hydrophobia. He must have caught it if, as the doctor suggested, fear alone could bring it on. He was wild with fear when he heard of the affair. In his secret heart he thought there ought to have been a law, by which anyone bitten by a mad dog should then and there be slaughtered like an ox in the rinderpest to stamp the plague out. As, however, he could not venture to suggest this to Mrs. Tuck, he insisted to her, first, on Dick's instant expulsion from the house.

Mrs. Tuck, by representing the whole county as certain to be scandalised at this mode of rewarding Dick for his heroic rescue of Ida, brought him to reason. She had, however, to give in to the sole condition on which he would consent to harbour so horrible a peril for another hour in the house.

Dick was to be locked into his room

every night, and not set free in the morning until he had drunk to the last drop a glass of water brought him by Mr. Tuck's own confidential valet. Even then Mr. Tuck was not reassured, for the valet could not in common honesty say that the captain had shown no abhorrence of the draught.

"Did he sob?" Mr. Tuck would ask eagerly.

"No, sir; not sob, sir, exactly; but it was a trouble to him, like."

"Did he choke in trying to drink it?"

"Not, as you might say, choke, sir; he jibbed a bit at it."

"But there was no paroxysm?"

"He swore tremendous, sir, and threw the pillers at me."

"I mean he wasn't convulsed?"

"Law, no, sir! aggravated rayther."

Here Mr. Tuck turns impatiently from the valet to send Mrs. Tuck for a more rational report.

It was in revenge for this morning dose of water that Dick passed on his medicine to Mr. Tuck, as in much the more danger of rabies of the two.

It will be seen that Dick took this business with incredible placidity. It was not in his nature to be anxious. He was so far from running out effusively to meet misfortune half-way that he would cut it when it met him and forget it when it passed. Besides, he had, as he had good reason to have, perfect faith in his own and the doctor's merciless surgery.

Mrs. Tuck, however, did not share Dick's serene assurance. Still less did Ida. The girl was wretched in the thought that this dreadful death, if it overtook Dick, would lie at her door. For, we need hardly say, Dick did not take the trouble to correct the version of the affair he found current. Why should he?

He hated to do anything unpleasant to himself or unpleasant to others, and to undeceive the household in this matter would, he thought, have been both. It would certainly have made his aunt, Ida, and himself look foolish if, after all the praise and gratitude heaped upon him, he were to tell them coolly that he had had no idea of Ida's danger, or of any danger, when he blundered in between her and the dog.

Therefore Dick contented himself with pooh-poohing the heroism attributed to him with a magnanimity which crowned it, to his aunt's thinking and to Ida's.

"Why, what would you have had me do, aunt?" he would ask, in deprecating Mrs.

Tuck's praises. "Would you have had me stand by with my hands in my pockets to see Miss Luard attacked by my own dog? If Dick had done so, you'd discharge him."

Dick was a page of tender years. This put the thing low enough. But then Mrs. Tuck and Ida felt that, as De Quincey somewhere remarks, there are occasions when it is heroic to do a thing, though it would be dastardly not to do it, and though there is no middle way of escape from "the great refusal."

Therefore, Dick, in making nothing of his heroism, only enhanced it in their eyes.

As for Dick's conscience, it troubled him as little as his digestion, and of that vice—conscience, self-respect, he knew nothing. So he took to himself all this glory and gratitude without compunction—with complacency, rather—for he came at last to regard them, as he regarded everything, as his mere due.

There was but one possible motive which might have made him disclaim the credit he accepted—the stimulus this heroic rescue gave to his aunt's matchmaking; but there was now no such passive resistance on Dick's side to her schemes. On the contrary, there was more even than a passive submission—there was an active adhesion to them on the part of our Adonis.

For Ida seemed now no more far off and high up, only to be won after long siege, and only to be held by harassing and never-remitted vigilance. From seeming cold, proud, unapproachable, she suddenly seemed meek, winning, and to be won without insuperable or insupportable difficulties.

In truth, many feelings combined to transform Ida—remorse, admiration, gratitude. She had, she thought, cruelly misjudged Dick. She had taken him to be a selfish, lazy, pleasure-seeker, who cared only for his own ease, and would not stir foot or finger for anyone else in the world. Yet beneath all this seeming easy, selfish, and indolent pococurantism lay the most unlooked-for kind of heroism, still, strong, unconscious, magnanimous, which did a great thing greatly, and cared not to speak or hear of it again.

You see, Ida was of a romantic age and sex, and had her mind so possessed with high ideals, as to be readily duped by the appearance of their realisation. Your ghost-seer is always a man who believed in ghosts to begin with, whose mind is so

possessed with his superstition that a scarecrow of shreds and patches, waving in the night wind, looks to him of the other awful world. Similarly Ida's mind was so full of heroic ideals, that Dick's apparent heroism imposed on her completely.

All that Mrs. Tuck had suggested in the matchmaking conversation with Ida, recorded in the last chapter, seemed no more incredible to the girl. So much lay unsuspected beneath Dick's light manner, that love itself might have lain there concealed, and concealed for the very reason assigned by Mrs. Tuck—Dick's magnanimous repulsion from the mere appearance of fortune-hunting. For had he not shown himself magnanimous in greater things? And was this not love, which now at last began to disclose itself?

It was—such love as Dick had to offer. He took Ida's intense anxiety about him, her admiration and her gratitude, for the first beginnings of love on her side. It was inexpressibly pleasant to him to be the centre of interest to this superb beauty, of whom but yesterday he stood in awe. It appeared to him, as to the hero of Locksley Hall, that :

Now her cheek was pale and thinner, than should be for one so young,  
And her eyes on all my motions with a mute observance hung.

Nor was this Dick's coxcombry. Ida was haunted, harassed, harrowed with an anxiety lest Dick should fall a victim to the horrible death from which he had saved her. Now Dick, as he did not share this anxiety, did not understand it, and therefore naturally took evidences of it for symptoms of a more personal and intrinsic interest in him—an interest made intelligible to him by his aunt's confession that she had given Ida to understand that he was in love with her. Mrs. Tuck had made this move in the game just at the proper moment, when he was beginning both to believe it himself, and to wish that Ida should believe it. Thinking that Dick kept his hands off the prize within his reach out of mere and pure magnanimity, she meant by this confession to burn his boats, break down his bridges, and force him forward in spite of himself.

"It's rather like dunning her for a debt, aunt, isn't it?" he said in reply to one of his aunt's exhortations to be more explicit and pronounced in his attentions. "She thinks she owes me her life, and she

might think I was asking her hand in payment."

"My dear Dick, she doesn't think you love her because you saved her life, but she knows you saved her life because you loved her. She knew you loved her before this thing happened at all."

"Knew I loved her! But I never——"

"But I did, Dick. There, I may as well make a clean breast of it. When you said you were held back from declaring yourself by some silly notion that it was unfair to her, I thought it time to take the thing into my own hands. So I gave her a broad hint of your feelings."

"You did! What did she say?" eagerly.

"Just what I expected."

"What?"

"Nothing."

"She couldn't have said much less."

"Much more, you mean. She might have said a great deal less. She might have said she was very, very sorry—very much distressed, and so on. What would you expect her to say? 'Thank you, I think I shall change my mind and take him; he's very nice.'"

"It all depends upon how you put it, aunt. If you offered me straight out, like an ice, she might have said, 'Thank you, no; he sets my teeth on edge.' But, if you merely hinted my feelings to her, she might affect to misunderstand you as the least ungracious form of refusal."

"She might easily affect to misunderstand you, if you offered yourself as you say and as you do, Dick, 'like an ice.' But I made what I meant plainer than you are doing, and Ida is quite quick enough to take a hint and to give a hint, too. If she wished to say, 'No, thank you,' indirectly, she'd have said it more plainly than by silence. Silence doesn't stand for 'No,' generally."

"Do you mean it stood for 'Yes'?"

"Indeed I do not, Dick, mean anything of the sort. A thing isn't white because it isn't black. There are plenty of shades between."

"Couleur de rose?"

"I didn't know couleur de rose was a shade between black and white."

"But you know, aunt, with me 'Nothing succeeds like success;' couleur de rose is my winning colour."

"A blush? yes. You need encouragement; you were always diffident, Dick, always."

"Always with her, aunt. Not with other

girls, I admit; but she's not like other girls."

"There's no girl like her, if you mean that, Dick," with much warmth. "It isn't that she's an heiress—I know the value of money, no one knows it better, or has had better reason to know it—but I forget her fortune when I think of her. And you expect her to fling herself at your head!"

"I don't know what you'd have, aunt," grumbled Dick. "Would I have shown her more respect if I treated her like Miss Bates?"

"There's something between, Dick."

"And I've hit it, haven't I? Anyhow I've gone by your advice, aunt. You told me I must be seedy to fetch her, and I'm sure, except that I've not taken Kirk's rot, I've done what I could to be knocked over," looking ruefully at his mangled arm, as though he had arranged this little affair of the mad dog with the view of "fetching" Ida.

This was a trump-card with his aunt, as Dick knew.

"Well, Dick, and you have 'fetched' her, as you call it. She's a good deal more anxious about you than you are about yourself. I don't think you've been ever out of her mind since it happened."

"She thinks she owes her life to me."

"There's that, of course; but I think there's more. And I'm sure there might be more if you were in earnest in the matter."

"Well, aunt, if you'll make the running for me I will do it, if it's to be done by the spur."

And he meant it, too. He was now as much in love with this strange, new, timid, tremulous Ida as he ever had been, or ever could be, with any one. And of this he gave, that very evening, an incredible proof.

"The doctor has been asking again to-day after you, Richard. I didn't tell him about the medicine, but I did about the stimulants. He looked very serious over it. He said you might at least restrict yourself to claret. I wish you would for a week or two. Ida, you ask him."

"I?" stammered Ida, taken completely aback.

"Well, my dear, he'll do it for you, and you are almost as much interested as he. If anything were to happen you'd think it your doing, I know."

This horrible "if anything were to happen," inspired Ida's anxious face and eager tone.

"I wish you would, Captain Brabazon" Dick promptly put down the decanter, and pushed aside the half-filled glass.

"Then I shall, of course."

And he did, at least while under their anxious eyes.

## REMINISCENCES OF JAMAICA.\*

### IN THREE PARTS. PART I.

THE entrance from seaward into the harbour of Port Royal, is protected by cays or coral reefs, apparently not long risen above the surface, as little soil has collected upon them, and one is nearly awash. They bear curious old-world names, taken from the ancient navigators' charts, and suggesting wild orgies indulged in under the brazen sun while conducting the survey of the harbour. Drunken-men's Cay, Rum Cay, Gun Cay, are all of small dimensions, clothed with green nearly to the water's edge.

It is a lovely sight on nearing these cays to watch the water gradually shoal. Little by little the limpid depths grow clearer and greener, till a fairy forest of living, breathing coral appears as if but an inch or two below the surface; you cannot believe that six feet of water rolls over it. Sea-urchins, sea-anemones, starfish, and other fleshy zoophytes enjoy themselves in their own flabby way among the corals, expanding and collapsing with the gently heaving water, but retiring within themselves and lying flat at the bottom, shapeless jellies, at the slightest hint of capture. Nothing more lovely can be conceived than the corals as seen from a boat. Large flat masses of the shape of a toadstool; great white branches like a deer's antlers, tipped with blue, red, and violet; rear themselves towards the surface in fragile loveliness, while mounds of brainstone look as smooth and round as if fresh from a mason's hands. Delicate filmy seaweed of every tint forms a soft carpet, showing off by contrast the brilliant whiteness of the coral, but disappointing when brought to the surface—a collapsed mass of pulp. Night falls here so suddenly, without any intervening twilight, as to leave little enough time for getting home while a glimmer remains sufficient to steer clear of the coral-reefs just awash. It is particularly disagreeable to hear, when hurrying homewards belated, crunch, crash, crunch, as a sharp spike of coral penetrates

\* ALL THE YEAR ROUND, New Series, Vol. 52. p. 389, "Port Royal."

the thin sides of the boat, and you are left lamenting, up to the knees in water, and despair at your heart, till perchance somebody sees you from the ships, and comes to the rescue.

One of our pleasantest amusements, albeit rather a toilsome one, was a picnic to Rock Spring, the source of the water-supply, ten miles away, at the head of Kingston Harbour. Having succeeded at great personal labour in collecting all who consented to be dragged from their beds at four-thirty a.m., a start was made in the gun-boat Heron, steam-tender to the commodore's flag-ship, about five. Arriving at about seven, and landing on the piles, you walk at first in single file beside the aqueduct and pipes that convey the water to the holds of the tank-vessels. The reservoir is hewn out of solid grey-green rock on the side of Long Mountain; it is capable of containing over two hundred tons of water, and though six feet deep, is of such a lovely transparency, that it is difficult to believe you are not looking into an empty space with a clean rocky bottom. The water oozes through a fissure in the green stone; it is not known where the spring exactly rises, but the water is absolutely clean, pure, wholesome, and free from the shadow of impurity—I say this, because in yellow-fever epidemics the water-supply is the first thing to be suspected. Beneath, lies a tranquil vale far from pollution or human habitation. At a respectful distance (lest a single leaf should fall and taint the carefully-guarded water) bananas wave and fruit, while the course of a small stream is marked by an impervious forest of strong *Osmunda regalis*, measuring from twelve to seventeen feet in height, thickly carpeted with peppermint and water-cress.

The scene of our picnic was usually laid higher up the mountain, between the great buttress-like roots of a particularly large cotton-tree. Breakfast being ready, also several additional guests from Kingston, Up Park, and the Gardens, tea, coffee, and especially iced claret-cup by the gallon, disappeared as soon as made; and black crabs, deliciously cooked in their shells; cold calipiver (the salmon of Jamaica), taken in the mountain lakes; chickens fed by ourselves upon the white meat of the cocoanut; excellent eggs; scones; oranges; neesberries, a rough brown fruit, second to none when eaten at the exact moment of perfection; "Matrimony," a delicious compound composed of star-apples,

oranges, ice, and sugar, form a repast not to be despised. Cigars and idleness followed, after which the light-hearted middies amused themselves by making the young King of Mosquito wash up the tumblers and glasses.

"William Henry Clarence," so named in honour of our sailor king, William the Fourth, who was a great patron of his father and uncle, succeeded at a very early age to the almost barren honours of the Kingdom of Mosquito on the death of his uncle, a courteous sable gentleman, whose end was unlimited conviviality.

This poor young lad of eighteen died,—it is believed by poison—about a year after returning to Blewfields, Honduras, his seat of government, which might have become an enlightened and habitable place had his life been spared to exercise any authority. He was of a singularly amiable disposition, talented and well-meaning, with fine Indian features and straight, black hair. Much care had been bestowed upon his education by the Baptists to whom he had been confided, but he had the instincts of a soldier, and told me in confidence how he longed to be sent to a military college, but the funds available for his education out of the Mosquito "civil list" did not allow of any wild extravagance. On such festive occasions as a grand luncheon at the Admiralty House the young king was attired in a blue military frock-coat and cap, with gold buttons and red facings, rendered regal by a broad light-blue watered-ribbon, worn across his chest, like the Order of the Bath, in which he took immense pride.

Fleeing before the first hot rays of the advancing sun, we usually got home by half-past ten, just as the sea-breeze set in, bathed, and rested for the day.

Opposite Port Royal, and guarding the entrance to Kingston Harbour, are two once important forts, Apostles' Battery and Fort Augusta. To seaward of the former is Green Bay, a place celebrated in olden days for duels. Nothing now rewards a visit here, but the grave of a Frenchman, Lewis Baldy, of whom it is recounted on his tombstone that in the great earthquake of 1692 he was swallowed up at Port Royal and disgorged again into the sea, but survived this extraordinary experience for many years.

Beyond Green Bay again, on the most hopelessly sterile spot in Jamaica, herded together under Government supervision the lepers of the island. Shunned by all

mankind, bereft of everything that makes life endurable, they yet live on without hope or joy, often till extreme old age. When you have said they have enough food, you have said all. These poor souls are beyond the reach of everything but death, and even that last enemy is in no hurry to claim them.

At Fort Augusta, besides the powder-magazine, there is still standing a great range of barracks, tenanted only by flocks of pigeons and by bats and owls. The graveyard attached to the fort is full of tablets to the memory of a vast army who were allowed to perish of yellow-fever in this pestilential place. In these days of sanitary precautions, it seems astonishing that Englishmen should have been brought out here, planted ashore at Fort Augusta—a place surrounded by marshes and black, stagnant, reedy estuaries, now the home of alligators and screech-owls—and have been allowed, about seventy to one hundred years ago, to have died like rotten sheep. Half hidden among giant cacti, mangrove, and cashew, a scrub, impenetrable, and not even picturesque, are to be found hundreds of tons of old thirty-two pounders, which, apparently to save trouble and get them out of the way when the two or three big guns replaced them, were pitched from the ramparts into the thicket, where they lie half-buried in marshy débris. Various projects for shipping some of this valuable old iron are always being formed, with, as far as I know, no immediate result.

Apostles' Battery is perched on a slight rocky prominence, and is far healthier than Fort Augusta. The ruinous buildings are still made use of occasionally for a quarantine hospital. Port Henderson, close by, possesses a celebrated well and bath, blasted out of the rock and arched over with greenish-grey stone. Looking down into it you are quite unable to determine its depth, or, indeed, whether it contains any water at all, it is so absolutely clear and transparent. Once a poor young midshipman, fancying the bath must be very deep, took a header into it; striking violently against the bottom, his neck was dislocated, and he died in a few hours.

Food is a difficulty at Port Royal—eatables are only to be obtained from the market at Kingston, five miles off. Beef alone is cheaper than in England, mutton dearer and nastier; goat is very frequently substituted for mutton, though, when taxed with the fraud, the butcher disclaims the insinuation with scorn. Fowls are remark-

ably thin and tough, and I often gave a shilling for four eggs. Turtle is cheap—sixpence a pound for fine fat alderman's turtle; but notwithstanding its cheapness, an accomplished cook prefers to have plenty of beef stock and calves' feet, wherewith to make the soup both strong and gelatinous, before any turtle at all is put into it—in fact, the turtle is the least ingredient in good turtle-soup! Black crabs are easily obtainable; we, however, always had grave doubts as to the nature of the last food upon which they had gorged themselves, and so they were educated in barrels for three weeks upon barley-meal. The crabs are then boiled, minced, seasoned, and served up in their shells. One of our party was awake in the middle of the night by a most curious sound, as of some creature being dragged along the corridor, occasionally tapping a sharp little heel. Daylight revealed a large black crab which had escaped from the barrel, mounted a long flight of steps, and had finally taken refuge upon the mosquito net of the bed, where it clung desperately by one claw. Game there is none; a few little sandpipers were sometimes shot on the palisades between the lights, and were not bad. Fish are coarse and tasteless, so that gourmands have a bad time of it in Jamaica.

Servants are a grave difficulty; the climate is too trying for English people, whereas our Barbadian or Jamaican cook and cook's mate really enjoyed themselves in an atmosphere resembling the tropical orchid-house at Kew Gardens. One was horrible dirty, the next inordinately fat, the last, a Barbadian, clean, and a very tolerable cook, though wasteful and extravagant, and his turtle-soup was excellent enough to cover a multitude of sins.

I often heard that the native servants were revengeful; on one occasion only did we find them so. A young black girl in our employ, who had come to us highly recommended, was convicted of flagrant misconduct; she was accordingly warned to pack up her things, and be ready to go to Kingston by the steam-launch in the morning. During the afternoon the iced water in a cooler, always standing in the dining-room, was observed to present a cloudy, whitish appearance; so much so, that it was thrown away untasted. Next morning when our early coffee was poured out, a broad yellow stain still remained on the side of the cup. I sent for the cook and pointed it out to him; he seemed to

know perfectly well what was the matter with it, and quickly carried it away, hurriedly saying: "I bring missus fresh coffee." Before I had the least realised that an attempt had been made to poison us, the coffee was poured away. I afterwards found out that, after being dismissed, the girl hovered about the kitchen all the afternoon, quite an unusual thing, and was the first up in the morning, still loitering about the kitchen door. The same girl afterwards accosted us in the market at Kingston with the greatest cheerfulness, as if nothing whatever had happened to prevent a cordial greeting on our part. I frequently heard of cases where native poisons were carried about by native servants—and trusted servants—for years, "in case" they might be suddenly wanted to "pay out" some unlucky employer or fellow-servant who had offended them. Obeah poisoning is also extensively carried out in remote nooks, particularly in the mountains, where incantations resembling those of ancient witchcraft, are practised with the aid of a white cock. We never could keep a white bird in the hills; they were always stolen for Obeah purposes.

The former wife of a friend of my own, wasted, pined, and died under a constant course of some irritant poison, administered (it was afterwards discovered) by her trusted housekeeper, in the expectation that the reins of government would pass into her own hands with the appurtenances thereof. However, when the poor lady died, so much grave suspicion attached to this woman, who had carried out her cruel task with fiendish malice, that she disappeared no one knew whither.

That there is a diabolical element lurking in the apparently good-tempered and easy-going Jamaican, was amply shown in the atrocities committed at Morant Bay during the rebellion of 1865, on their previously adored masters and mistresses.

All black people love fine clothes. On one of the rare occasions on which I appeared in a ball-dress at Port Royal, my English maid thoughtfully proposed that the poor old black scullerywoman in the kitchen should come up and see me. "Come in," I said, hearing a succession of loud sniffs outside. No sooner was the door open and I stood revealed to sight, than she fell upon me with outstretched arms, clasping my knees in the wildest excitement and admiration. I could well

have dispensed with that portion of it, her apron and person in general being far from immaculate. She was an excellent creature, albeit dirty, and when she died, wishing to mark our sense of honest and faithful service, her poor little shrivelled black body, enclosed in a neat coffin, was borne by six stalwart seamen to the stern-sheets of the Commodore's galley, followed by her nearest relations and friends in the whaler. The two boats were then slowly rowed past the flag-ship and other men-of-war, who flew their flags half-mast for the occasion, to the landing-place on the palisades, where the clergyman, and a numerous assemblage of Port Royal, were awaiting them. Our only regret was that she could not have attended her own funeral, she would have been so flattered and charmed at the attention paid to her.

A funeral is heartily enjoyed by the natives, none of whom would willingly absent themselves from one, and they will tramp any distance in the blazing sun to attend a wake. As soon as the breath is out of a body, it is treated with a fear and respect which are far from being accorded to it during life. As many relations as can be collected together in the very limited time, pack into the death-chamber, where they pass the whole of the succeeding night, singing without one moment's intermission, till there are signs of the dawn. Their voices then ascend higher and higher, till an excruciatingly high key is attained, when with a burst of shrill and prolonged notes, the struggling spirit is thought to be at rest, safe from the violence of the powers of darkness, who are always in waiting the first night to seize and bear away the dead. The ninth night after death is also an important one. Another ceaseless period of singing, another great gathering, and the spirit is for ever at peace. It must be highly undesirable to possess a large circle of relations, as these nights of wild excitement are most exhausting, and during epidemics of cholera, small-pox, and measles, were the means, till put an end to by Government, of largely spreading contagion. Even after the most stringent prohibitions, wakes were continually held in secret on the hillsides, the few police being quite powerless to prevent them—even if they tried, which I doubt, as the force consists of black or coloured men, sympathising with their race in these fetish customs. For one

native buried in the cemeteries, certainly five are put into a hole in their own garden, causing the particular spot to be shunned after nightfall with abject fear, as long as the place of sepulchre is remembered.

The negroes are not frequent eaters, but when they do eat—a favourite time is about nine at night—the quantity consumed is beyond belief. After these Gargantuan meals they lie down, and sleep the sleep of the gorged. Very little change is either made or desired in their diet from day to day; a pudding composed of yam, salt-fish, calavances, aché, and fat, forming the staple of their food all the year round.

These people think we are quite absurd in the frequency of our meals, and I don't know that they are wrong. A man-servant of ours was heard to soliloquise, with a sigh enough to blow a candle out, "Dem white people never done eat," as he prepared to lay the cloth for the fourth time that day.

Their naïve revelations are sometimes very amusing. Here is a typical case. Illness and various hindrances had prevented our returning a first visit quite as quickly as etiquette demanded. Some little time afterwards we proceeded to enquire if Mrs. — was at home? "No," shortly replied an offended-looking black lady, opening about two inches of the door, "she has waited 'pon you for tree day, and now she has gone out." Our visit had evidently been expected sooner, and its non-payment freely commented upon.

Bidden to stay with the Governor we crossed to Port Henderson in the galley. The Governor's carriage in waiting at that desolate landing-place made quite a gorgeous spot of colour, the ridiculously pompous ebony faces of his servants looking comically out of their smart scarlet liveries. An ugly drive of twelve miles over sandy tracts bordered with cashew and straight scrubby cactus, brought us to Spanish Town, once the flourishing capital of the island, when Kingston consisted of a few mud huts upon the shore. Little by little its grandeur has departed. King's House (a fine relic of the old Spanish times, with vast banqueting and ball rooms, arched with black chestnut), public offices, archives, museum, have all been removed to Kingston and elsewhere, leaving the once handsome square, crowded with fine habitable buildings, desolate.

One great attraction Spanish Town must always possess for travellers in the lovely Bogue Walk close by, a natural ravine winding with the Cobre river at the bottom of a deep gorge. A mountain rises up sheer on each side, clothed and bathed in a tangle of tropical verdure, with just space enough at the bottom for the rushing river, its bed strewn with grey rocks, and the drive beside it. After passing the Bogue Walk the mountains recede, the turbulent river, no longer pent up, runs quietly, and the verdant plains of Linstead open to view; here we "baited" and melted, before commencing the ascent of Mount Diavolo, two thousand feet high. The view from the summit is glorious: miles and miles of yellow cane and blue-green tobacco, with the river twisting and turning in and out. Dwarf stone parapets were our sole protection against a fall into the valley, a thousand feet below. Midway in the descent the horses swerved as if not under command, there was a lurch, and then a nod on the part of the driver. The horses were now tearing down the steep decline; another swerve, and the off-wheel, striking against the stone parapet, had half its tire torn violently off. The coachman was asleep! Fearing that the flapping tire would alarm the already excited horses, we got out and walked, while the horses were led into Moneague, where a tinker of a wheelwright "dished" the wheel the wrong way in putting on a new tire, causing it to wobble about in an eccentric manner all the rest of the journey. Moneague is a very old town, with the remains of many fine Spanish buildings, blighted and decayed, and fast mingling with the dust. Sundown brought us to our journey's end; here a fine park-like domain of great beauty and extent, rolled away from the comfortable well-kept house. A thousand head of cattle spread over the plains, and dotted the hillside. Clumps of wide-spreading trees made delicious shade for countless animals all the hot noonday, but in dry seasons they suffered much from want of water, often being driven fifteen or twenty miles for a drink. "Ticks," originally imported from Cuba, infest the cattle, and make it a dangerous experiment for man as well as beast to roam about these beautiful grasslands. Here the large landowner seems more akin to the Jamaica planter of old, keeping troops of black servants, and exercising unbounded hospitality. The return from St. Ann's was com-

menced at four-thirty a.m., it being still pitch-dark. As morning dawned a thick white mist lay upon the valley like a vast lake, hiding everything below from sight; we seemed to be driving into the air, leaving the clouds beneath us. On the very summit of Mount Diavolo a halt was made to see the sun rise. First it touched the horizon, then blazed forth, piercing the heavy mists, which lifted, rose, and sailed away into the skies at the first touch of its hot rays. The Bogue Walk seen later in the day assumes an altogether different aspect when lighted up from the opposite side. Rio Cobré has so many waterfalls down which to tumble, so much broken rock to hurry over, that it is often very dangerous, especially during sudden freshets, caused by an afternoon shower in the hills. Early in the day the river is generally running quietly. Groups of gay-hearted chattering women then collect in the stillest pools; each with her dress kilted up, standing knee-deep in front of her favourite flat stone. Here she will talk incessantly while lazily washing out the family rags, which are ruthlessly banged against the stones instead of being rubbed and wrung. One woman remains longer than the rest, perhaps, unobservant of any change, till a sudden flood lifts her off her feet, flings her head against a jagged rock, and nothing more is ever seen of her; nor do they ever seem to gain experience, for no week passes without some such accident happening in one or other of the many streams in the island.

## A SECRET.

I TOLD my secret to the sweet wild roses,  
Heavy with dew, new-waking in the morn,  
And they had breathed it to a thousand others,  
Before another day was slowly born.  
"Oh, fickle roses!" said I, "you shall perish!"  
So plucked them for my lady sweet to wear,  
In the pure silence of her maiden bosom,  
The curled luxuriance of her chestnut hair.  
I told the secret to a bird new building  
Her nest at peace within the spreading tree;  
And e'er her children had begun to chatter  
She told it o'er and o'er right joyously.  
"Oh, traitor bird!" I whispered, "stay thy  
singing,  
Thou dost not know, there in thy nest above,  
That secrets are not made to tell to others,  
That silence is the birthright of true love!"  
I told the secret to my love, my lady,  
She held it closely to her darling breast!  
Then as I clasped her, came a tiny whisper:  
"The birds and flowers told me all the rest,  
Nor should'st thou chide them that they spake the  
secret—  
The whole world is a chord of love divine,  
And birds and flowers but fulfil their mission,  
In telling secrets, sweet as mine and thine!"

## "CHINESE GORDON."\*

## IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

IN reading once again the story of the Ever Victorious Army, we have been struck with the singular military capacity of its hero and its captain. It seems to us, moreover, that in a general way, but particularly in the recent voluminous remarks in the newspapers, to that capacity justice has not been done. People give to Gordon the credit of being a great administrator, a novel diplomatist, and the fortunate possessor of a strange and wondrous influence over the hearts of men; but his ability and achievements as a leader of armies and a master of campaigns seem to have been considerably, if not entirely, overlooked. Gordon the Christian governor, and Gordon the kindly helper of the poor, are realised in the popular mind, and loved; Gordon, the consummate strategist, is barely understood. And yet, as it seems to us, the military resource and audacity, the originality and keen perfectitude of plan, and the almost magic insight into an enemy's intention, which are visible throughout his career—in the Crimea, in China, in the Soudan—are points of character not less important nor less admirable than the qualities which have received a wider recognition because they appeal more directly to sentiment and imagination.

Rectitude, courage, simple trust in God—these qualities are great, and enable men to do great things; but in Gordon there is something more. He has the genius of a great general, a rapidity of thought and energy of action which, if not entirely singular, perhaps, in themselves, become so in virtue of his peculiar personality, the daring of his invention, and often the humour of his methods. For Gordon, with all his earnestness and mysticism, with all his unsparing thoroughness in every department of action assigned to him by others or selected by himself, is a humourist.

At the close of the Taiping Rebellion, Gordon returned to England with the one idea of enjoying well-earned quiet in the circle of his family. But "no sooner," writes Mr. Hake, "had he set foot in this country than invitations came in upon him from all quarters, and to have him for a guest was the season's ideal; friends

\* "The Story of Chinese Gordon," by A. Egmont Hake. With two portraits and two maps. London: Remington and Co., 1884.

and kinsmen were made the bearers of superb invitations, all of which he had the courage to decline." When he found himself pronounced a hero he ceased to listen, and even begged a fellow-officer who had written an account of the campaign to let the subject drop. "To push and intrigue was impossible;" and, at a moment when most men would have accepted with proud pleasure the courtesies of society and the praises of the great, he was content to resume his duty as a Royal Engineer. A striking instance of this exceptional modesty (or is it an exceptional and admirable vanity?) is related in connection with his *Journal of the Taiping War*. This valuable document was illustrated by himself, and he had sent it home from China on the understanding that it should be seen by none but his family. But one of Her Majesty's Ministers heard of the manuscript, borrowed it, and was so impressed that he had it printed for the benefit of his colleagues. Late one evening Gordon enquired about his journal, and being told what had happened, rose from table and sped in hot haste to the Minister's house. The Minister was not at home; Gordon hurried to the printers, demanded his MS., and ordered the printed copies to be destroyed and the type broken up. No one has seen the manuscript since, and Mr. Hake declares there is every probability of its having been destroyed.

In 1865, Gordon was appointed Commanding Engineer at Gravesend, and there for six years he remained, fulfilling his official duties in the construction of the Thames defences and devoting himself, in a manner almost unexampled, to the poor. "His house was school, hospital, and almshouse in turn," and his delight in children, and especially in boys working on the river or the sea, is one of the sunniest traits in his character. Many he rescued from the gutter, cleansed and clothed, and fed, and kept them in his home for weeks until work and place were found for them. He called them his "kings," and marked their voyages with innumerable pins stuck in a map of the world that hung over his mantelpiece, and these pins he "moved from point to point as his youngsters advanced," and day by day prayed for them as they went. The lads loved him, and scribbled on the fences a touching legend of their own invention: "God bless the Kernel!"

Pleasant indeed it would be to linger over this chapter in the life of this wonder-

ful man; but biography is long, and our pages are short. Let us pass at once to what, in our opinion, is by far the most romantic period in Gordon's career—the years that he spent in the Soudan, the land of the dry desert, and mighty rivers, and fiery sun; the remote unfriended country of the hunters of men and their victims, the suffering and human blacks.

Early in 1874 Gordon succeeded Sir Samuel Baker as Governor of the Tribes in Upper Egypt. The Khedive—Ismail—proposed to give him ten thousand pounds a year. He would not hear of it; he accepted two thousand pounds. This act was much discussed at the time, and the right interpretation was not always forthcoming. But it was entirely consistent with Gordon's conduct in similar affairs in China and elsewhere. At the conclusion of the campaign against the Taipings, the Chinese Government presented the Captain of the Ever Victorious Army with a large fortune. He not only rejected it with contempt, but actually thrashed from his tent the messengers who brought it!

Egypt had made vast strides into the heart of Africa since 1853, and as its empire spread, so grew the slave-trade, and so, under the unscrupulous and terrible rule of the Pashas, deepened the misery of the people. The Arab captains, "the hunters of men," attained great political power, and their abominable traffic was the dominant interest of everybody in the land, from the little children of the blacks, who wanted freedom, to the Governor-General of the Soudan himself, who wanted coin. So strong, indeed, did the slavers at last become that the government got at once ashamed and afraid. The mightiest and cleverest of them was one Sebehr Rahama, who, by the way, has lately come to the front again in a very remarkable and entirely Anglo-Egyptian fashion. This superiorman-hunter was called the Black Pasha, and commanded thirty stations. Conscious of his power, he set up as the rival and equal of the Khedive himself, with a court of Arab ruffians and burlesque of princely state. The Khedive was considerably moved by the preposterous behaviour of this upstart, and determined forthwith to humble him to the dust. An attempt to effect this object failed miserably; and the Khedive was weak enough, in his dilemma of fear and doubt, to make Sebehr a Bey, and to accept his services in the invasion of Darfur. Darfur

being conquered, Sebehr was rewarded with the rank of Pasha. But, like Hung of China, he cherished vast ambitions. He would be content with nothing less than the Governor-Generalship of the Soudan. This pretension brought matters to a crisis. Hitherto, Ismail had encouraged slave-dealing, for it increased his revenue; but, the moment his personal supremacy was threatened by the man whose power he, by his own cupidity, had helped to make, he was converted into what Mr. Hake happily terms "active and sonorous philanthropy." Of a sudden he began to regard the slave-trade with "holy horror," and determined to suppress it—at least, so he said. For this purpose he engaged Sir Samuel C. Baker; to this end he enlisted the genius of Gordon.

Gordon had not been at Cairo many days before he wrote: "I think I can see the true motive of the expedition, and believe it to be a straw to catch the attention of the English people." Nevertheless, he determined to go through with his undertaking; for he saw that he could help the suffering tribes. In his own words may be read the spirit in which he began and carried on his perilous task: "I will do it, for I value my life as naught, and should only leave much weariness for perfect peace."

Gordon wished to proceed by ordinary steamer to Souakim, but Nubar Pasha (the able minister who is once again in office, and who, Mr. Hake says, in many ways tried Gordon's patience) insisted upon his going in state. The special train was engaged, therefore; but the engine collapsed. Thus, in huge delight, Gordon wrote: "They had begun in glory, and ended in shame."

His first decree is as follows, and in the light of his new mission to the land of his old labours, it will be read with interest, particularly when it is considered that the circumstances differ in nothing but unessentials:

"By reason of the authority of the Governor of the Provinces of the Equatorial Lakes, with which His Highness the Khedive has invested me, and the irregularities which until now have been committed, it is henceforth decreed:

"1. That the traffic in ivory is the monopoly of the Government.

"2. No person may enter these provinces without a 'teskere' from the Governor-General of Soudan, such 'teskere' being available only after it shall have received

the visa of the competent authority at Gondokoro, or elsewhere.

"3. No person may recruit or organise armed bands within these provinces.

"4. The importation of firearms and gunpowder is prohibited.

"5. Whosoever shall disobey this decree will be punished with all the rigour of the military laws. GORDON."

This proclaimed, he sailed for Gondokoro—a strange river voyage, amidst crocodiles that slumbered on the mud, and ponderous river-horses that splashed and blew in the stream, whilst little mobs of monkeys came down from the gum-trees to the margin to drink, and wild birds sailed in flocks overhead. One night, Gordon, thinking of home in the moonlight, was startled by loud laughing in a bush on the river's bank. "I felt put out, but the irony came from birds, that laughed at us . . . for some time in a very rude way. They were a species of stork, and seemed in capital spirits, and highly amused at anybody thinking of going up to Gondokoro with the hope of doing anything."

By a rare coincidence of favourable circumstances—such as rarely gladden the traveller in any land, least of all in what is called Upper Egypt—and hastened by Gordon's invincible energy, the little band—consisting of Gordon, his staff, and escort—reached Khartoum in an incredibly short space of time. From that flat-roofed, mud-built city Gordon started, after a busy stay of eight days, for Gondokoro. The journey was accomplished by steamer, and was not without romantic incident. Once when cutting wood for the steamer's fires, they surprised some Dinkas—a people who are black, and pastoral, and worshippers of wizards. The chief, in full dress (a neck-lace), was induced to come on board. He came and softly licked the back of Gordon's hand, and held his face to his own, and "made as if he were spitting." At dinner he devoured his neighbour's portion as well as his own, after which he and his liege-men sang a hymn of thanksgiving, and proceeded to crawl to Gordon, that they might kiss his feet. That was denied them, but they were sent away rejoicing, under a splendid burden of beads.

At the junction of the Bahr-Gazelle with the Gondokoro River they found swarms of natives who had rubbed themselves with wood-ash until their complexions were "the colour of slate-pencil." These people were half-starved and in great suffering. "What," writes

Gordon, "what a mystery, is it not, why they are created? A life of fear and misery night and day! One does not wonder at their not fearing death. No one can conceive the utter misery of these lands. Heat and mosquitos day and night all the year round. But I like the work, for I believe I can do a great deal to ameliorate the lot of the people." At Bohr, a slavers' stronghold, the people were "anything but civil: they had heard of the Khartoum decree;" but at St. Croix, a mission-station, the steamer passed to the joyous sounds of dance and song.

Gondokoro was reached in twenty-four days, and once there, Gordon was at his seat of government, and in the very heart of his perilous task. So swift had been his journey that the townsmen had not heard even of his nomination. His advent amazed them. Gondokoro was a trysting-place for wretchedness and danger; the state of the people was "as bad as it well could be;" and so terribly had they been treated that, half a mile from its walls, the Governor-General himself would have gone in peril of his life. But Gordon's spirit did not fail. He was confident that he could relieve the people of their sufferings, that he could build a better state of life for them if—there always is an "if"—if he could but win their confidence. To achieve that necessary consummation he passed hither and thither through the land, there giving grain, here employing the natives to plant their patches with maize. Why employ them to do that which is their normal occupation? Because before he came they had ceased to sow since they could never reap the fruits of their toil; they were systematically robbed of their little harvest. And so when the strange fame of this kingly white man spread amongst them, in their simple hearts they thought he could do all things, and flocked about him in great numbers, and begged that he would buy their children, whom they were too poor to feed themselves. Clearly their confidence was being surely won; and if one thing in this world is certain it is that, in those bare and burning lands, the name of Gordon is remembered to this day with gratitude.

This grand result was reached in great part by his uncompromising attitude towards the slavers. The slavers are, perhaps, as unequivocal a race of blackguards as ever existed; and they were in collusion with the Government. "They stole the cattle

and kidnapped their owners, and they shared the double booty with officials of a liberal turn of mind."

Here is a record of one exploit, typical of many, and showing how Gordon dealt with this state of things. By the timely interception of some letters, he discovered that two thousand stolen cows and a troop of kidnapped negroes were on their way from a gang of man-hunters to that estimable personage, the governor of Fashoda. The cavalcade was promptly stopped. The cows, since it was impossible to return them to their owners, were confiscated; the slaves he either sent home or bought himself, and they came about him, trying to touch his hand, or even the hem of his garment. In China, Gordon had conquered rebels to enlist them on his own side; and much the same happened here. The chief slavers he cast into prison, but after a while those who proved themselves possessed of useful qualities he released and employed. Equally with the great essential duties of his position, the most trivial matters received unremitting attention. He was never idle, even amusing himself in odd moments of leisure by "inventing traps for the huge rats that shared his cabin." And he writes of a poor, sick old woman whom he nursed and fed for weeks, but all in vain: "She had her tobacco up to the last. What a change from her misery! I suppose she filled her place in life as well as Queen Elizabeth."

His work grew more dangerous and difficult. His native staff was useless from intrigue and treachery, and his Europeans to a man were down with ague and fever. Yet notwithstanding traitors in the camp, and enemies without, Gordon toiled on at his post, and, though worn to a shadow, was at once Governor of the Provinces and nurse to his staff. His difficulties were increased by the real or feigned ineptitude of his subordinates. When the commandant he had left at Gondokoro was ordered to send up a mountain howitzer, he forwarded empty ammunition-tubes instead of full. Thus Gordon was left defenceless with ten men, in a place where no Arab would have stayed without a hundred. And yet we find him always cheerful, and devoted to the people—teaching them, with novel methods, the use of money; whilst he delighted his ragamuffin soldiery with the wonders of a magic-lantern, and by firing a gun a hundred and fifty yards off with a magnetic exploder! In truth,

with Gordon, to be single-handed is to work marvels; and during this period he laboured with astonishing energy and success. He converted Khartoum into a Botany Bay for do-nothing governors, the blackguard slavers whom he caught and punished, and the traitors of his own staff. To punish rebellious chiefs, he resorted, not to fire and sword, but to the *razzia*, or cattle-raid, a method much more humorous, and infinitely more final in its results.

Net, however, that he had no fighting. The wizard-worshippers gave him much trouble, and many of the tribes would not be content until they had felt the might of his arm. Brisk battles were frequent, and in one of them the bulk of the force with him at the time was completely "eaten up," as our friends the Zulus pleasantly describe the process of annihilation. This engagement is in some ways typical of them all, and it is instructive. In travelling through a turbulent region of his kingdom, Gordon observed that the temper of the tribes was, to say the least, forbidding. Wizards gathered on the hills, and cursed their enemy—as they supposed Gordon to be—and waved him off the face of the earth; spies hung about the camp and in the long grass; altogether there was general warning of a storm. Gordon was joined about this time by his good lieutenant Linant and his party, who came in from an outlying station. Gordon wished to find a steamer, which lay somewhere in the river, and for this purpose passed thirty men over to the east bank. The instant they landed, down came the natives; Gordon followed at once. The natives retorted by making a rush at his men. They were repulsed, and Gordon attempted to parley. They refused, and, knowing him for the chief, tried to surround him; he let them come near, and then drove them back with bullets. Linant proposed that he should burn their houses, and Gordon, fearing further mischief unless he effectually retaliated, agreed. One morning, therefore, he sent off a party of forty-one men. At mid-day he heard firing, and saw Linant in a red shirt he had given him, on a hill; the red shirt, and the party led by its wearer, were visible for a couple of hours, when they disappeared. Later on thirty or forty blacks were seen running down to the river, and Gordon, concluding they had gone to his steamer, fired on them as they ran. Ten minutes afterwards, one of his own detachment appeared on the opposite

bank; he had been disarmed, and declared that all the others of the party were killed. The red shirt had maddened the natives; the party got scattered; spears did the rest. Gordon was left with only thirty men, and he decided to make a strategic movement to the rear. Wonderful to relate, the tribesmen did not molest him—with the exception of a certain wizard who elected to survey the retreat from the top of a rock, whence he "grinned and jeered, and vaticinated," as Gordon was giving orders. The Governor took his rifle. "I don't think that's a healthy spot from which to deliver an address," he said, and the wizard prophesied no more.

After a brief holiday in London, Gordon returned to Egypt early in 1877. He was appointed Governor-General of the Soudan, with Darfur and the provinces of the Equator—a district one thousand six hundred and forty miles long, and nearly seven hundred wide. Furthermore, he was deputed to look into Abyssinian affairs, and to negotiate with King John for a settlement of pending disputes. Into events Abyssinian, however, the space at our disposal does not permit us to enter. Suffice it to say that they were every whit as full of romance and significance as anything else in Gordon's wonderful career.

His installation in the new position, so much more important and difficult than any he had yet held, took place at Khartoum on the 5th of May. The firman of the Khedive and an address were read by the Cadi, and a royal salute was fired. Gordon was expected to make a speech. He said: "With the help of God I will hold the balance level." This brief and trenchant sentence delighted the people more, says Mr. Hake, than if he had talked for an hour. Afterwards, he ordered gratuities to be given to the deserving poor; in three days he had distributed upwards of one thousand pounds of his own money. The formalities of his new state disgusted him; he was "guarded like an ingot of gold," and was given, it seems, in the midst of solemn ceremonies, to making irrelevant humorous remarks to the great chiefs—in English, which they did not understand.

Many things had happened in the Soudan since 1874. When he took up the reins of government in 1877, he found the country, as Mr. Hake says, "quick with war." The provincial governors were worthless, and often mutinous; the slavers were out in revolt; the six thousand Bashi-Bazouks

who were used as frontier-guards robbed on their own account, and winked at the doings of the slavers; savage and reckless tribes had to be subdued. "It was a stupendous task, to give peace to a country quick with war; to suppress slavery among a people to whom trade in human flesh was life, and honour, and fortune; to make an army out of perhaps the worst material ever seen; to grow a flourishing trade and a fair revenue in the wildest anarchy in the world."

One of the most difficult and desperate of the tasks before Gordon, was the subjugation of the vast province of the Bahr-Gazelle. This, itself a little continent, had been lashed to anarchy and wretchedness by Sebehr, the Black Pasha, already mentioned. It was necessary that he and his son Suleiman, with their army of man-hunters, should be subdued, and the land brought to rule and order. But, before that could be achieved, it was of the utmost urgency that Gordon should go to Darfur, where revolt was rampant, and the Khedive's garrisons were besieged in their barracks by the rebels. Here that splendid confidence in himself, which is one of his strongest characteristics, helped him in an extraordinary degree. His army was a useless mob of ragamuffins—"nondescripts," he called them; the tribes and the slavers he had to subdue were warlike and fierce; his nondescripts could be trusted only to run away from danger, or to plot the murder of himself. Most men would not have undertaken such work under such severely trying conditions; but Gordon never faltered.

The city of Dara plays a strong part in these chapters of Gordon's story. During the revolt caused by Haroun, the pretender to the throne of Darfur, its people were shut within its walls. They had heard nothing from without for six months, and when, one day, there was a sudden stir at the gate, and the Governor-General himself rode into their midst, they were dumb-founded. It was, says Gordon, in his trenchant graphic way—"It was like the relief of Lucknow." The illustration, so full of moving memories and great suggestions, was only just. As Gordon advanced, dangers gathered on every side, until, as Mr. Hake happily puts it, he was "ringed about with perils." A crisis came, which needed all his energy and indomitable will to keep him master of the situation. His presence in the field against Haroun was urgent; on either hand he was menaced

by powerful tribes; worse than all else, Suleiman, son of Sebehr, the Black Pasha, sat down with six thousand robbers before Dara, and ravaged the land around. In the midst of all this, his army was plotting his life; his secretary fell ill. The measure of his troubles was full indeed. But his spirit never quailed. So rapid were his movements now, that no idea of them can be conveyed in this place; Mr. Hake himself has perforce found it impossible to give more than a sketch of them. Brief and slight as that sketch is, it indicates with a sort of swift dramaticism the marvellous activity and resource of its hero.

Whilst in the heart of all this battling and peril, he heard something which rendered all else as naught. Suleiman, with his six thousand, was on the eve of attacking Dara. Not an instant was lost. Ignoring nondescripts and allies alike, and, as usual, far in advance of his lagging escort of Bashi-Bazouks, Gordon mounted his camel and rode straight away to Dara. The distance was eighty-five miles; he did it in a day and a half, unarmed and alone. "A dirty, red-faced man," covered with flies, he burst upon his people as a thunderbolt; they could not believe their eyes. Next day, as dawn broke over the city, he put on the "golden armour" of his office, and rode to the camp of the robbers, three miles off. The chiefs were awestruck and startled. Gordon drank a glass of water, ordered Suleiman to follow with his people to his divan, and rode back to Dara. The son of Sebehr came with his chiefs, and they sat in a circle in the Governor's divan. Then, in "choice Arabic," as Gordon humorously puts it, Gordon said to them: "You meditate revolt; I know it. You shall have my ultimatum now: I will disarm you and break you up." They listened in a dead silence, and went away to consider. At any moment they could have put Gordon and his "garrison of sheep soldiers" to the sword; amazed by his utter indifference to danger, and quelled, perhaps, by the magic of his eye, they submitted.

Of his further labours in the Soudan and Abyssinia—in the latter country he afterwards had an adventure nearly as dramatic as that just related, and even more dangerous—we cannot now speak. What they were—how varied and difficult, how amusing, how pathetic, and how, after all, they were to be unrequited—all this is written in Mr. Hake's pages; to these the curious

and sympathetic reader must turn for many a romance, many a piece of daring, many a touch of sincere and gentle charity, many an astounding proof of courage, that considerations of space prevent our dealing with here. With that rare modesty of his, and with an heroic and suggestive brevity like the diction of the Bible, Gordon has said: "I have cut off the slave-dealers in their strongholds, and I made the people love me." It is true. To this day the poor blacks of the Soudan beg the white traveller to send back to them the "good Pasha," and it is the knowledge of this, the certainty of his influence upon the people, of his personal magnetic power over the wild savages and pastoral blacks of the Soudan—these are the things which feed the hopes all of us cherish for the success of the mission upon which, after the eleventh hour has struck, he has been hurriedly despatched.

### COMPULSORY THRIFT.

THE truth of the saying that Heaven helps those who help themselves, is not in any way affected by the inexorable ethical law, which imposes on all members of a community the duty of helping each other. The difficulties which surround the fulfilment of that duty are manifold, but, as regards the recipients, they may be broadly classed, as by John Stuart Mill, into two sets of consequences to be considered. These are, "the consequences of the assistance itself, and the consequences of relying on the assistance."

The onerous importance of the last of the "two sets" becomes very prominent in cases of colliery accidents and other disasters affecting the circumstances of large numbers of people. The immediate consequences of help afforded in exceptional times of calamity must be always, or nearly always, beneficial. But the after-consequences, especially in industrial communities, open up serious possibilities. There are difficulties, local and peculiar to each event. But the broad and general difficulties, in the way of public subscriptions to repair disaster in such cases, are that the assurance that assistance will be forthcoming may tend to discourage habits of providence, may render men less attentive to the ordinary precautions of their avocations, and less dependent on their own energies, skill, and foresight. A charity which deteriorates the moral fibre of its

object may be ultimately more harmful than immediately beneficial. Another difficulty is that emotional charity goes usually too far, while ordinary charity does not go far enough. Those who are suddenly left destitute by some appalling accident which wrings the public heart, may, by a spasm of generosity, be better provided for to the end of their days than they ever had any reasonable expectation of being, while the great normal mass of destitution in the country is left to the partial and ineffectual care of Poor Law officials and individual philanthropists. There is no lack of charity in the world, but it is woefully ill-directed and is too often hopelessly wasted.

Whether or not charity should take the form of public subscriptions for permanent provision, in the case of accidents to operatives, incurred in the pursuit of their daily business, is a matter admitting of much discussion. There can be no doubt, however, that if the needful assistance could be assured without spasmodic public action, it would be infinitely preferable. There is but one way in which this can be done, viz., by insurance. The Post Office and other institutions offer means to the working man by which, for a small payment, he can secure provision for his family, and also for himself during temporary disablement. But the little word "can" makes all the difference. The voluntary acceptance of the advantages of insurance implies an amount of prudence, and thought, and thrift which are the characteristics, not of the majority, but of the minority of men. The men who voluntarily insure against death and accidents are probably those who, in the absence of the facilities offered, would lay by something every week against a rainy day. It is to provide for the improvident and thoughtless that these large public subscriptions are so often needed. Hence has arisen one of the great questions of the day: Should the relief of improvidence be voluntary or compulsory? It is admitted that we cannot make men sober by Act of Parliament. Is it possible to make them thrifty by Act of Parliament?

The Germans, at any rate, seem to think it is. They are going to try it, and there are some points about the Workman's Insurance Bill, which has lately passed the Reichstag, which merit our careful consideration.

It has been found that in Germany, only twelve and a half per cent. of the work-people joined voluntary benefit societies.

Therefore a system of compulsory insurance has been instituted, and is to be introduced into all branches of industry, except in agriculture, where the existing provisions are believed to be adequate.

The law will apply to all persons paid by salary or wages in mining, shipping, manufacturing, and mechanical operations, with certain limitations in the case of managers, clerks, and persons temporarily employed. The funds of existing benefit societies are not to be interfered with, but the government will fix the minimum and maximum assistance to be given. Employers of labour are to contribute the funds, two-thirds of which they will collect from the men in deductions from wages, and the remaining third they will provide themselves. Both the contributions and the assistance are to be gauged in proportion to the wages paid, and the assistance for medical attendance and maintenance while a man is unable to follow his calling, will be at the rate of fifty per cent. of his usual wages, beginning from the third day after his illness, and continuing, if necessary, for thirteen weeks.

The Act is a provision both against sickness and accident. The funds, although under government control, are not to be centralised, but each trade may organise its own fund, or several trades may join. In the case of such organisations, the trades may fix the amounts of contributions by the members, but these must not, to begin with, exceed two per cent. of the wages, nor ever exceed three per cent. of the wages. Nor must the assistance granted ever be reduced below the minimum fixed by government. The government charges itself with the custody and investment of the funds, and the state is thus the insurer.

No operative, however improvident, can avoid saving so much as will guard him from destitution, and the receipt of assistance from the funds will not interfere with his civil rights as would the receipt of poor-law relief.

Another experiment in compulsory thrift has been begun in Australia. The scheme in this case is that every male member of the community shall be compelled to pay, in his youth or on attaining his majority, a sum proportioned to his circumstances, but not less than ten pounds, which shall be appropriated and invested by the state, in order to secure him against destitution during sickness, for the remainder of his life.

Neither the German nor the Australian

scheme is novel in conception. Both have been frequently proposed for this country, and have been discussed by economists and in Parliament. But in both instances the schemes are for the first time going to be put to a practical test, and the issue will be watched with the deepest interest.

It has been argued that because it is incumbent on a state to compel every parent to educate his child, therefore it is also incumbent on a state to compel every person to make provision for the future. There is, however, no analogy between compulsory education and compulsory thrift. The state must recognise the evident duty of every man to provide for his offspring, and it is proper that it should interfere to compel him. It is proper for a state to insist on compliance with regulations to prevent the spread of disease, and it is proper for a state to insist on the members of a community supporting its friendless paupers.

We have a compulsory Poor Law which provides for the results of thriftlessness, but it does not follow that we should have the state to interfere to prevent thriftlessness. In fact, the effect of such interference would be to destroy individual thrift. It seems paradoxical to say, but it is true, that thrift which is compulsory is not thrift. That which is done on compulsion ceases to be a virtue.

Writing of the poor laws, John Stuart Mill said: "If the condition of a person receiving relief is made as eligible as that of the labourer who supports himself by his own exertions, the system would strike at the root of all individual industry and self-government." The Poor Law system does not do this, but a compulsory benefit society would render the future of a careless, thriftless, and self-indulgent man as free from care and destitution as that of the provident, thrifty, prudent, thoughtful man.

The less interference we have of the state, in affairs which men can and should manage for themselves, the better. The experiences of our voluntary benefit and insurance societies show us vastly better results than seem to have been attained in Germany. These societies are capable of development to sufficient extent to meet the case on voluntary principles. It should be the aim of all leaders and teachers to endeavour to raise the masses to a belief in, and a dependence on, their own manliness, not be always craving and clamouring for the state to do that which they should do themselves. Compulsory

thrift, we admit, is vastly better than universal improvidence, but what is better than all is that Labour should recognise its own dignity, and should realise that providence is its mainspring, and thrift its motor. Sixpence set aside from each week's wages as a voluntary provision for the future, is worth a shilling exacted by law for the same end. Thrift, like temperance, should grow from seeds sown within. While, therefore, it will be interesting to watch the progress of the German and Australian experiments, it is much more gratifying to observe the large and steady growth of our own Foresters and Oddfellows, and other friendly and industrial societies.

### BETWEEN TWO STOOLS.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

"I HAVE something to tell you, Mary."

Mary Ranley let her work fall into her lap, and looked up at the speaker. She was a tall, slim, dark-haired woman of seven or eight and twenty, with a plain, patient face, and wistful eyes. She wore a dress of a quiet grey tint, and the room in which she was seated was furnished with all the good taste that nowadays is consistent with strict economy. She had not a single claim, in feature or colouring, to any of the acknowledged forms of prettiness, and yet something about her would have compelled a second glance from those who had obtained a first.

"Well, Tom, what is it?" Her face softened as her glance fell on Tom Danvers, handsome, blue-eyed, fair-haired Tom, whom people spoke of only to praise. They had been playfellows, these two, who were alike only in years. They were lovers now, and they would be husband and wife one day, at least that hope had beautified existence for both of them during seven years. Seven years! It is a big slice out of the best part of the allotted threescore and ten, though it was only lately that one of this faithful pair had begun to think so. The other had never thought it yet.

"What is it you have to tell me?"

Tom crossed the room, and bent over her to stroke her hair. The movement was a caress, and then it enabled him to avoid her eyes.

"I have been offered an appointment at Rangoon."

"At Rangoon." She echoed the words without any intonation of surprise. "That is——?"

"In Burmah. As if you did not know that and everything else, my little scholar; and Rangoon is a big place with openings for lots of fellows. Stephens has written, saying he needs a partner, and so I think, if you don't mind, that I shall go out there in a month or two."

Mary Ranley did not answer. In the pause that ensued she heard the purring of the cat on the hearth, and smelt the faint odour of the mignonette growing in the window-box. She knew quite well that the linnets outside were piping to the roses, and that Tom Danvers was waiting for her answer; but she also knew that her pulses were growing fainter and fainter, and that the weight of a long-dreaded blow had fallen.

"Are you not getting on here?" she asked after a pause. "I thought you told me that your work was increasing; I thought you expected that we might marry in the spring."

"It was all a mistake, due to my confounded hopefulness. I got a new case or two when Smithson was away for his holidays, but he holds the patients, and will go on holding them. The fact is, Mary, there is not scope here for two medical men, and I knew that, though I settled in the place when you wished it. But I have not made a hundred pounds in the past twelve months, and you know that means failure."

"But I make a good deal by my teaching, and I thought that, working together, we might get on."

"That is quite out of the question," he said fretfully, turning away from the pleading, patient eyes. "I am not going to have my wife drudging all day long that we may not starve. I'll support her myself, or do without her."

The pale hands lying on the piece of needlework pressed each other a little, then the sweet voice spoke softly and firmly:

"I have been thinking often lately, Tom, that you would be wiser to do without me. You see we have known each other so long that we have really grown to be more friends than lovers, and I am far older than you in reality, though not perhaps in years, and so I cannot help believing at times that our engagement has been a mistake."

"Oh, you do, do you?" wrathfully.

"You see it has lasted seven years now, and in seven years, you know, your science teaches that we change completely, and so I think, Tom dear, that it would be far better if you planned your future without

letting any thought of me hamper you. I am safe enough, you know; the high-school pays me a comfortable salary, and I have grown accustomed to the routine of life with Mrs. Gillet, and so, dear, I can offer quite honestly to set you free." She was smiling at him bravely, and her eyes were very clear and bright, but she had an idea that her heart was weeping.

"You are tired of me, I suppose? You imagine that I am likely to be a failure, and you women care only for success," he answered bitterly.

"I suppose the working ones of us know that success comes some time to the steady and patient," she said, the first hard tone sounding in her voice.

"And have I not been either?"

"Dear Tom, don't imagine that I wish to find fault or criticise, I love you far too well for that; there is no one in all the world as dear to me as you are. But do you not think yourself that our engagement has been too protracted to seem hopeful now? You don't feel it as I do; it seems to take all my strength away to see our life together always slipping farther and farther off."

"If I make things worse for you, of course that alters matters." His face had lost its smiling softness, his brow was stern and angry.

"You are my youth and my happiness, the end of all my dreams," she said passionately; "the want of you will leave my whole future barren."

"Then why need you give me up?"

"Because I think you will be freer without me, because you are learning to dread me, and so the love is growing imperfect."

"It was for your sake I thought of Rangoon," he said sullenly.

"Yes, dear, and it is for your sake, Heaven knows, that I propose to give you up. I am a drag on you, and what you feel for me is far more friendship than love."

"If you think so I have nothing more to say." He rose to go stiffly, and then the tender heart in her failed.

"Oh, Tom, if it were not best for you, do you think I would have spoken?"

She wanted him to tell her that it was not best for him, she wanted him to prove to her that all her doubts were needless; but she had hurt him, and at her relenting he hardened himself.

"If it is best for you, that is enough," he said, and took his hat and left her without looking at her again.

When the door had closed behind him Mary Ranley sat five minutes motionless. The airy bubble she had spent seven years blowing, was shattered by her own touch. She scarcely realised what had happened yet, but there was a numb aching at her heart, far worse than any keen, comprehending pang. Her tears began to flow heartbrokenly, as she mechanically folded the piece of the poor little trousseau on which she had been working, the trousseau that never would be needed now. Tom was gone, and Tom was the lover of her whole life; but—and in this capacity she would miss him far more—he had always been her pet and protégé. What would her motherly nature do now, without any one to plan for or protect?

Women's sorrows seek consolation in the strangest ways. In the first hour of her loss Mary Ranley went up among the gathered treasures of seven hopeful years, and touched with reverent fondness the accumulated trifles destined for the future home. There were the little bronzes meant for Tom's study, and purchased out of the economies of her holiday-time; there were pretty vases, and little brackets, and scraps of tasteful china—all the feminine trifles that would have given a homelikeness to his bare lodgings. She remembered where she had gathered them up—sometimes in Tom's presence—and even the words he had said in jest over one thing and another. And now Tom was out of her life, and there never would be any home for them together. She felt as if the big oak chest were a coffin containing all her youth as she locked it, shutting the relics out of her sight; and then she went down and drank her solitary tea and tried to realise all the emptiness of the coming years.

Would he write to her, she wondered, or would she be left always without tidings? And when would he go? And would he be relieved that they had parted, after the first edge of pain had worn off?

Six days passed without even an indirect word from him, and the morning's work was acquiring a maddening monotony, and the evening's silence a despairing loneliness. Mary had few girl-friends and no confidantes, and so her heart-ache missed the common alleviation of talking it over. If he never came or wrote, if she never heard of him again, there was no one in all the world to help or comfort her.

But he would not be cruel enough to treat her with silence for ever; he would send her a message one day, and it

would be one of peace and friendship. That faith grew in her day by day, battling with the growing despair; and then one day fact ranged itself on faith's side—a letter awaited her as she returned from the walk she had taken to escape from her thoughts.

She held it between her hands for a moment without looking at it, and all her fictitious strength gave way. She threw aside the cloak that had suddenly become a burden, and sat down in her bonnet to read Tom's message.

But the letter was not from Tom; she saw that as she unfolded it. The writing was bigger, bolder, more legible. She read it all through before she reached the signature. When she had seen that she read the letter again. It was from John Hayward, the man she had always thought Mousie Graham's lover, and it contained an offer of marriage for herself.

"I have loved you always, Mary," he wrote, "and I have only refrained from telling you so because I had so little to offer till now. I did not dare ask you to share a worse home than you have been accustomed to, and so I held my peace. But at last I have attained to what I have honestly coveted so long; at last Armstrong and Co. have made me head of my department, and so I dare, after a devotion nearly as protracted as Jacob's, to ask you for my own."

It was a plain manly statement, and it went to Mary Ranley's sore heart. There was no gush, no agony of passion in it; nothing but the simple tale of a man who had known how to be very patient and faithful. Yet his love for her startled her inexpressibly. She had never dreamed of it. There had never seemed anything but the merest good-comradeship in his attitude towards her—but of course his silence and self-restraint rendered his love all the more flattering, and John would make a good husband. Mary had an idea that the man who lived straightly and earnestly would love steadfastly, and she felt that the woman who became John Hayward's wife would have all chances of happiness in her favour. For an instant she wished this offer had come years before. Now, although Tom was not half so fine a character as John Hayward, she loved him, and that made all the difference.

When she came to think of it, it was odd that John made no mention of Tom. Surely he had known she was engaged to him; surely they had always made that patent to everyone? Mary Ranley sat

thinking over her offer in all its bearings, till the fire waned and her tea was ice-cold.

John Hayward's offer was unexpected, but it was very fair and manly. She almost started to find she was considering it, that opposing counsel seemed to be arguing the pros. and cons., with herself for judge and jury. On one side were love, and ease, and pleasure; on the other side was a barren life, holding only the memory of a disappointment. She was not a heroine, and teaching for her bread during a whole lifetime seemed sad and lonely enough.

But then, would not marriage with another than Tom seem almost sacrilege, after all they had planned together? Why, their whole future had been mapped out with each other, and union with John Hayward would be but a dreary deception.

Then she went on to think of her pupils, whom she did not and could not love. She had no theories about them. They met her as units without individuality. They obeyed her because they feared her; they would defy her if they dared. And then there were her fellow-teachers—Miss Griffiths, who was growing so old and odd; Miss Henderson, whom her class made a habit of tricking and deceiving, because she was short-sighted and tolerant, as the ageing so often grow. Would she, Mary Ranley, ever find herself in the case of these—ever see herself lonely, uncared for, just endured for want of a better? Oh no! Rather a hundred times a marriage into which friendship and respect at least would enter.

Her letter was written hurriedly at last, and when it was finished it was an acceptance. But she told John Hayward the truth. She had loved Tom Danvers honestly for years, but now that they had parted she did not think any memory of him would ever rise up between her and the husband she was prepared to accept and honour. She wrote this all quite calmly, but, when it was finished, she felt, somehow, as though she were twenty years older than she had been, and as if life had suddenly become quite humdrum and commonplace. Yet she had no thought of changing her mind. She rang the bell composedly for Bessie, the little maid-of-all-work, and gave her the letter with a hand that never faltered.

"This is your evening out, I think, Bessie. You may post this for me on your way through the village," she said, bethinking herself even of the little servant's affairs in that crisis of her life.

"Yes, miss, surely," Bessie answered, blushing, for she too had a lover, and these evenings out meant the joy of the whole week.

Somehow Miss Ranley felt that she wanted the letter out of her reach, and vacillation out of her power.

## CHAPTER II.

"I HAVE come to make things right. I can't do without you, Mary; you are my sheet-anchor; I have felt adrift since I lost you."

So Tom Danvers spoke, hurrying after her as she came home from afternoon school.

There was a drizzling rain falling, and the landscape was blurred, and the heavy clouds hung low, and the woman knew that the face she turned to her lover was pinched and white.

"I thought you had gone, Tom; it is so long since I heard of you."

"It is a week, and perhaps you did not ask about me. I never thought of going in any mad hurry like that. There is nothing decided even yet."

"Is there not? I thought—I had an idea there was," she answered falteringly.

"Oh no. Stephens only wrote to offer me the appointment, and I went to consult you about it when you took me up so shortly." There was a tone of reproach in his voice, for he felt still that he had been badly used.

"I did not mean to hurt you," she protested meekly.

"Well, perhaps some fellows don't mind being thrown over after seven years' waiting, and just as there is a prospect of something definite at last!"

"The prospect seemed very vague to me," smiling faintly.

"Oh, because you would not listen. Stephens offers me either three hundred as a salary, or a share in the proceeds, whichever I like, and he says the climate is good and living not very high; and I had almost persuaded myself, Mary, that we might go out together—married. But still, if you prefer me to grub on here I shall do it, so as you continue to love me."

She had stopped, and they faced each other, and he saw now how pale she was.

"I would go with you to Rangoon if I could; it all seems so easy now when it is too late," she answered with a break in her voice.

"And why is it too late?"

"Because I have promised to marry another man."

"You have? Well, certainly, you have not lost any time."

"I have not."

She could have laughed with the dreariest, most dismal mirth. She was so contemptible in her own eyes; all she had done looked so strange and uncalled-for. Why, that very morning her senses had returned, and she knew that a brave, strong-hearted, successful woman—for she was successful in her own way—has no right to throw herself on any man's charity, just because he loves her, and because her life-story has been mistold. If she had only waited to post her letter next day herself it would never have reached its destination. Now John Hayward had her promise.

There was no escaping from the position in which she had placed herself; there was no possibility of showing herself even excusable; she certainly had hastened with all speed from the old love to the new.

"I had thought you so different from that," Tom said with bewildered incredulity; "I thought you would have been faithful to me even if we had parted—for a while, at least."

"But I was weaker and meaner, you see. I wanted some one to keep me in idleness and buy me fine dresses and treat me well, and, when you could not do it, I closed with the offer of the first man who could." She seemed to take a certain bitter pleasure in her self-accusation now.

"Oh, Mary, I can't believe it, it's not possible! You who were always so high and far removed from the temptations that beset ordinary women!" he burst forth, groaning.

"You overrated me; I overrated myself. You see now I am not worth taking to Rangoon, not worth loving or thinking about."

"But is it really true? Are you not torturing me with a cruel jest?"

"It is quite true; I have promised to be another man's wife, and I wrote him that no thought of you would ever stand between us," she answered, arraigning herself.

"Then you are a heartless woman, and I shall never forgive you!" he burst forth, pronouncing judgment on the spot, and then he rushed past her, and out of her sight, while she continued her solitary way with laggard steps, and a heart that lay in her bosom heavy as lead.

What can she do now? She has sown the wind, and the harvest of the whirlwind has been very swift and bitter. She has dallied with temptation, and her

momentary unfaithfulness has cost her self-respect. But she will be true to herself at last; she will recall the promise that should never have been given. It will not matter as far as her happiness is concerned, but it will be the first step in the painful process of self-restoration.

When her recantation was written there was a load off her mind; but she was not in any fever of impatience to post this letter, it would keep till she was on her way to school. After the hurried emotions of the last twenty-four hours she was physically tired, and so she sat rocking herself backwards and forwards in her wicker chair with a faint sensation of relief in the motion.

Twilight was fading, and timid little stars were trembling into the sky beyond the uncurtained windows, when there came a soft tap to the door, and Mousie Graham's rosy, roguish face peeped in.

"Oh, you are not busy—thank goodness for that! I was half afraid I might find you deep in the Differential Calculus, and I did so want a good long chat."

"Come in, dear, I am so glad to see you; it is an age since you were here before." Mary took the soft little face between her hands, and kissed the delicious pink cheeks.

"Grannie has been worse lately, weaker and more fretful, and so I felt I could not leave her without a special errand."

"But she is better to-day?"

"Oh yes, ever so much better, and then Aunt Lizzie came to pay her a little visit, so I left Grannie with her, and ran over to see you."

"That was very good of you, dear."

"Oh no, it was not; I came on business." Mousie laughed and flushed a little, then she drew a letter from her pocket. "This came addressed to me yesterday, but it is evidently meant for you. It is from that booby, John Hayward; he is always in the clouds, or among the cog-wheels of his looms, and so the result is a blunder." She unfolded the sheet as she spoke, and handed it to Mary, and this was what stood before the latter's astounded eyes:

"DEAR MISS RANLEY,—In the pleasant excursion we had together last summer, I remember your mentioning a book on ferns that you desired to have, but could not get, as you had forgotten the author's name. I have just come across a volume by Teakerstone, the opening chapter of which is on the *Osmunda regalis*. If you think this is the work in question I shall be happy to forward it to you.—Sincerely yours,  
JOHN HAYWARD."

Mary Ranley was sure some complex machinery in her head had got out of order, so loud and persistent was the whirring in her ears.

When she spoke at last, her voice sounded faint and far away.

"Is your name Mary?"

"Of course it is, or rather Mary Ann, but everyone calls me Mousie except John Hayward. He thought Mousie no name for a girl, and so he always called me Mary—Miss Mary; it did sound so funny."

"Then, Miss Mary, I have an offer of marriage for you. It came to me, and naturally enough I took it to myself."

Mousie was so flurried that she did not notice her friend's perturbation.

"I fancied," she said, holding the letter in her hand, but not looking at it, "that he must have been writing to me, and had mixed the covers. That is so like your very clever people! But how lucky the letter came to an engaged girl!"

"Well, I don't see the luck of it, for I wrote yesterday and accepted him."

"Oh, Mary! And Tom!"

"Tom and I had quarrelled, and John's letter came at my worst moment, so I accepted him."

Poor Mousie's eyes grew dim.

"In that case, Mary, I suppose you had better keep the letter," she said, faltering a little. "It was really sent to you, and, after all, I don't mind so very much."

"You are a generous little darling, but there is no necessity for your sacrifice even if Mr. Hayward would permit it. I wrote him my recantation this afternoon. There is the letter; you can send it to him with your own. He will be sure of its genuineness that way."

"Then the two girls kissed and cried over each other, and after the exchange of divers confidences Mousie went away, carrying John's letter, still unread, in her hand.

After she had gone Mary took out her needlework with an undefined feeling that chaos had come again, and that in the midst of it it was well to hold on to some commonplace everyday employment.

By-and-by Bessie came in with the tea-tray, and as she flitted about the table Mary spoke with the feeling of desperation which makes us always want to lay a finger on our wound.

"You posted my letter last night, Bessie?"

Bessie paused, the picture of consternation.

"Oh, miss, I'm afraid I forgot all about it."

"You forgot to take it out, I suppose?" speaking in a voice so high and eager that it scarcely sounded like her own.

"Oh no, miss, I took it, and put it in my waterproof-pocket, but Peter met me before I reached the office, and then I forgot; but I'll run out with it now in a minute."

"Bring it to me instead, please; I don't want it posted now."

Bessie never knew till this hour why Miss Ranley gave her five shillings instead of the scolding she expected, neither does John Hayward understand why letter number one never reached him.

Tom Danvers went to Rangoon, as he had said, in much disgust and despair. Mary's unfaithfulness had turned the sunlight into darkness for him, but through his pain a certain resolution to be and do something grew daily. He would forget her, he would never speak of her, and if men uttered her name he would turn aside, but he would do so well with his own life that one day she would know him the superior of the man she had married. So, in much wrath and scorn, he sailed away to succeed or fail as might be.

As for Mary, her life was all at the dead level of monotony now. There was always the morning's work, always the evening's enforced idleness, and periodically the long empty holidays in which her loneliness grew only more assertive. Like many another she was learning that—

It is not in the shipwreck and the strife  
We feel benumbed, and wish to be no more,  
But in the after silence on the shore,  
When all is lost, except a little life.

She was growing old, she would soon be thirty, and already there were white threads in the glossy smoothness of her hair, and she knew she was growing odder and more unsocial than Miss Griffiths or Miss Henderson had ever been. But she was a good teacher, she was a success in the high-school, and she clung to that poor triumph as her last source of happiness. It was she, the strong one, who would do a small work in a small groove all her life, and Tom who would grow to success and power. But she deserved that for her wrong estimate of both of them. And everyone knew he was doing well and that he had forgotten her. Why, it was only the other day that Mr. Wheelhouse had stopped her to tell her that he had just

been asking Tom by letter why he was neglecting Mary Ranley.

"It was very good of you," she had said, going home with another shaft rankling in her sore heart.

It was dusk as she went wearily down the street. The early October night was closing in, and broad bands of light from open doors fell across her path. The street was very still and empty, and she felt thankful for that and for the coming peace of her solitary parlour. But she stood for an instant on the doorstep to watch the trembling stars, before she rang the bell.

Bessie answered it with a beaming face. She was very fond of Miss Ranley, who had always been kind to her.

"There is a visitor for you in the parlour, miss."

"Oh, very well." Mary expected one of the pupil-teachers who wanted a certificate; so she went upstairs and put her outdoor things away, and brushed her hair, and then came down to be the schoolmistress at home. But it was not Jane Blakeney who rose at her entrance, but a tall, brown-bearded man, who looked into her face, and then held out his hands to her without a word.

"Tom!" she said with a little fluttering sigh; "Tom!"

"Yes, it is I. I came back as soon as ever I knew you were free."

"I have not deserved it."

"Perhaps not; but then, you see, I could not do without you. I need someone to scold me and keep me right."

"Oh no, Tom, never again; old things and old habits are all ended."

"And you threw the other fellow over?"

"No, not that exactly; it was all a mistake—all my pride and his stupidity; but I have been well punished for everything. I never thought you would come back."

"I did not mean to come back till I found there was no getting on without you."

And then Mary burst into tears, and stood sobbing against his shoulder:

"Oh, Tom, I have missed you so!" she said.

"Well, I am here now to take care of you; won't that be reversing the old order of things?" smiling at her fondly.

And so it came about that Mary Ranley, despite her dangerous hesitation between two stools, found a comfortable seat on one of them, after all.

*The Right of Translating Articles from ALL THE YEAR ROUND is reserved by the Authors.*